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AN OVERVIEW OF THE HALAL INDUSTRY IN THE GAMBIA WITH ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Kawsu Sanneh¹

Abstract: This study discusses an overview of the halal industry in The Gambia which is the smallest country in mainland Africa. Halal Industry has emerged as a new sector in the global economy, the industry is worth 2.3 trillion USD. It is currently dominated by Southeast Asia with Malaysia and Indonesia taking the lead, followed by other continents like the United States of America, Europe, and Africa. Islam is believed to have been practiced in West Africa since the 7th Century amounting to over 12 centuries of Islamic influence in the region. The Gambia is a country with a 95 percent Muslim population, necessitating consumer awareness of halal products and services. There are currently no established halal education institutes in The Gambia, which has had a significant impact on Muslim consumers' awareness of halal standards, spanning from local farmers to food vendors, local consumers, processing industries, and importers. The lack of formal halal educational institutions stands out as the most noticeable challenge. However, the vibrant Muslim population offers the highest opportunity. The paper is compiled from primary and secondary sources including government agencies, private firms, local consumers, journal articles, books, etc. to find out the awareness of halal products, opportunities, and challenges.

Keywords: *Halal Industry, Gambia, Challenges, Muslim Consumers, Shari'ah.*

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PRELUDE

Halal industry² is gaining global attention as a better alternative and standard for safety, quality assurance and hygiene.³ The industry represents a symbol of hope for the Muslim *ummah* as halal food is the only permissible food for consumption according to Islamic law. For non-Muslims it represents a symbol of hygiene, quality and safety. The paper briefly relates the setting of the Gambia, the history of Islam in the Gambia, prospects, opportunities, benefits, and challenges of *halal* industry in the Gambia. The Gambia has a strong demand for halal products and services, and according to prior pilot surveys, more than 85% percent of the population supports the development of a halal business.⁴ The halal business is a diverse sector comprised of seven primary sectors: culinary services, consumer goods, financial services, pharmaceutical goods, cosmetics, halal logistics, and tourism. The seven major sectors are further subdivided into four major segments: food and drinks, pharmaceuticals and health goods, cosmetics, and tourism and travel services.

Additionally, *halal* refers to keeping away from impure items throughout manufacturing, preparation, and storage from a *Shari'ah* standpoint. In the case of food, halal means that no impure equipment or ingredients were used throughout the preparation and production procedure. As a result of the preceding statement, it can be concluded that all foods are halal except swine/pork and its byproducts, animals that have died prior to being slaughtered properly, animals killed in the name of something or someone other than Allah, and intoxicants such as alcohol and liquids of similar characteristics. Predatory creatures, birds of prey, and land animals without external ears are also forbidden, as are blood and its by-products, and meals tainted with any of

² A legal incorporated industry in Islam that is responsible for determining what is prescribed according to Shari'ah and what is prohibited.

³ Engy Abdelkader, "To Judge or Not to Judge: A Comparative Analysis of Islamic Jurisprudential Approaches to Female Judges in the Muslim World (Indonesia, Egypt and Iran)," The Fordham Law Archive of Scholarship and History, 2014, <https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/ilj/vol37/iss2/2>.

⁴ Shaikh Ibn Abbas, "Awareness of Islamic Religious education and Integration: A case study on religious education awareness of Gambian People," Gambia: Movement for Islamic Research and Da'wah (MIRD, 2017).

the above-mentioned items.⁵ Foods containing gelatin, emulsifiers, flavours, and enzymes are deemed dubious (*Maṣbūh*) since their ingredients or components may come from ḥaram sources. Cattle and poultry shall be slaughtered according to the *dabīḥah* (prescribed slaughtering in Islam) procedure, which is mandated by *Šari'ah* in the case of animals and birds. As a result, it becomes obvious that ḥalal is a very broad term, as it encompasses not only the ingredients of food but also the entire process of preparation, manufacturing, and processing. All Muslim nations are expected to strictly adhere to the principles of ḥalal and ḥaram in all their activities.

Thus, a need for industry that will promote ḥalal and discourage ḥaram in all societal activities. Ḥalal industry was invented by the *majlis* community in the Gambia, who passed on the teachings of the *Qur'an* and implement it at local community levels. Most of the past scholars had established great *majlis* schools, wherein children receive early training in Islamic principles, norms, and values. Community members in the past depend on these scholars to clarify to them the laws of Allah, as well as rulings on what is ḥalal from what is ḥaram. The Gambia is a poor country whose people depend solely on subsistence farming, animal rearing, fishing, hunting, small scale businesses, and other domestic works for survival, thus there was a high need of teaching and clarification of *halal* principles for public guidance and safety⁶.

For example, those involved in crop cultivation needed to know what types of crops, vegetables and fruits are legal for consumption and for sale, the same applies to those in the fishing sector and those involved in various types of businesses including professional and local hunters. Ḥalal consumption is not optional but compulsory for mankind, which makes it an important issue for Muslims. The teachings and setting established by these ancient scholars helped to shape a future of ḥalal industry in the Gambia. Even though colonial governance has great influence on the country, it did not change the beliefs of the people, their respect for a strict compliance with ḥalal principles

⁵ Muhammad M. Chaudry Mian N. Riaz, "Halal Awareness and Education Schemes," Taylor & Francis (Taylor & Francis, October 26, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1201/9781315119564>.

⁶ The Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBOS) and ICF International. 2014. *The Gambia Demographic and Health Survey 2013*. Banjul, The Gambia, and Rockville, Maryland, USA: GBOS and ICF International.

and a need to avoid non halal food and services. The paper discusses the scope of halal industry in the Gambia.

MEANING AND DEFINITION

Halal is an Arabic term that literally translates as acceptable and lawful. It denotes anything that is permissible under Islamic law, as there is no enforceable legal document prohibiting it. It is something that Islamic law requires. Its antonym is *haram*, which translates as “illegal” or “prohibited”.⁷ Halal and haram are old and global principles. The two terms are two diametrically opposed words that have been employed in principle since the first units of creation were formed, to serve as a guiding principle in their worship and dealings, ensuring that halal is upheld and haram is avoided. They are ubiquitous in nature because they include a vast range of human activities, from *Ibādah* (worship) through *Mu'amalāt* (transactions) and *Mu'āšarāh* (social behaviours). According to *Wahab*, the term halal refers to permissible items or foods/drinks when used in the context of commerce and trade or as part of a trade description. Halal may also refer to any other term that implies that something is permissible under Islamic law for eating or use.

SOURCES OF HALAL

Islamic law is derived from four main sources namely, *Qur'an*, *Sunnah*, *Ijma* (scholarly consensus) and *Qīas* (analogy), the core principles of halal and haram are primarily derived from the Primary sources of *Šharī'ah* which are the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*, whilst the secondary principles of halal and haram obtain their sources from the secondary sources of *Šharī'ah* namely *Ijma* and *Qiyyas*.

Qur'an as the first source of *Šharī'ah*:

The *Qur'an* is a divine revelation which provides complete information with regards to principles of life and death. The purpose of human creation and the reward for good

⁷ Hamid, Nor'Adha Ab, Farah Mohd Shahwahid, Norziah Othman and Wawarah Saidpuddin. “Challenges And Ways Improving Malaysia Halal Food Industry.” (2017). ; Qarađāwī, Yūsuf. *Contemporary Fatawa: Current Issues in Islamic Fiqh: Fatāwá Mu'āṣirah*. Newark, NJ: Islamic Book Service, 1999.

and punishment for evil. God almighty enjoined the believers to consume that which is ḥalal and to show gratitude for His bounties provided for them. Consider the verses below.

“Oh, ye who believe! Eat of the good things wherewith we have provided for you and render gratitude to Allah if it is (indeed) He who ye worship.”⁸

The verses above emphasis consuming that which is good and legal for human welfare. Islamic laws are universally applicable regardless of race, creed, and gender. God almighty similarly enjoined the Messengers to eat of his enormous provisions only ḥalal products.

“Oh, ye Messengers! Eat of good things and do righteous deeds, indeed! I am aware of what ye do.”⁹

Because it is part of the religion, the term ḥalal involves cleanliness and hygiene in the food preparation process, and Allah only allows sanitary, safe, and ḥalal food or products for Muslim consumption. In the following *Qur’anic* verse, this is plainly stated.

“He has forbidden you only carrion, blood and swine flesh and that which has been immolated to (the name of) any other than Allah. But he who has been driven by necessity, neither craving nor transgressing, it is not sin for him. Indeed, Allah is forgiving, Merciful.”¹⁰

Similarly, Allah says; “Forbidden unto you (for food) are carrion and blood and swine flesh, and that which hath been dedicated unto any other than Allah, and the strangled, and the dead through beating, and the dead through falling from height, and that which hath been killed by (goring of) horns, and the devoured of wild beasts save that which ye make lawful (by slaughtering) and that which has been immolated unto idols. And (forbidden) that ye should swear by the divining arrows.”¹¹

God almighty addresses mankind at large to only consume permissible food; “*Oh Mankind! Eat of that which is lawful and wholesome.*”¹²

⁸ Al-Qur'an 2:172

⁹ Al-Qur'an 23:51

¹⁰ Al-Qur'an 2:173

¹¹ Al-Qur'an 5:3

¹² Al-Qur'an 2:168

These verses clarify to mankind as to what type of food are forbidden for consumption and which types are permissible. The commentators of *Qur'anic* exegesis have substantiated the reasons for the prohibitions through clarifications of the *Qur'anic* exegesis. For instance, the reason carrion and dead animals are forbidden because they are harmful to human wellbeing.

SUNNAH AS THE SECOND SOURCE OF HALAL

Sunnah comprises the sayings, actions, and clear approvals of the prophet (Peace be upon him) serve as the second source of *Halal* and *Šari'ah* at large. Sunnah provides detail rules pertaining to *halal* and *haram*. For example, the *hadīth* which is the saying of the prophet (peace be upon) whiles teaching the ummah of prescribed methods of slaughtering said; "*Verily Allah has prescribed proficiency in all things. Thus, if you kill, kill appropriately, and if you slaughter, slaughter well. Let each one of you sharpen his blade and let him spare suffering to the animal he slaughters.*"¹³

The prophet (peace be upon him) instructs us in this *hadīth* on how *halal* food should be prepared. As a result, believers should obey the prophet's (peace be upon him) instructions, particularly about killing. It is necessary to ensure that the animal suffers as little pain as possible during the slaughtering procedure, and that the equipment utilized is sharp enough to prevent inflicting undue agony on the animal. According to *Rafi' Ibn Khadīj*, the prophet (peace be upon him) spoke to a group of Muslims preparing to slaughter some animals. "*Utilize whatever causes blood to flow and consume the animals provided the name of Allah is invoked when they are slaughtered.*"¹⁴ Therefore, Muslims should take extra vigilance when it comes to current techniques of killing to ensure they adhere to Islamic teachings. Apart from that, the Islamic technique of animal killing takes place in a hygienic environment.

¹³ Abul-Husain Muslim, I., *Sahih Muslim*, Translated by Al-Khattab, N (Saudi: Dar-us-Salam Publications Inc, 2007), Hadith No: 1955.

¹⁴ Al-Bukhari, M. I. I., & Khan, M. M., *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih Al-Bukhari: Arabic-English (English and Arabic Edition)* (Saudi: Dar-us-Salam Publications, 1997), Book 22, Hadith No: 4846.

Halal slaughtering¹⁵, for example, cannot take place near pig slaughtering grounds since pork is prohibited. Before slaughter, the animal must be fed routinely and given water to drink. These are two examples of related requirements that must be observed in the benefit of the animal's welfare.¹⁶ Compliance with these rules and regulations ensures the slaughtering process runs well, minimizing discomfort to the animal, which is an approved act based on the prophet's *hadīth* (peace be upon him). Certain prohibited or non-*halal* food products are also mentioned in the prophet's *hadīth* (peace be upon him). For instance, *Az-Zuhri* reported that "Allah's Messenger prohibited the consumption of flesh from beasts with fangs."¹⁷

As a result, *halal* meals include all animals and birds that are not mentioned on the *ḥaram* food list in according to Islamic law, all plants that are not detrimental to human health, and foods and beverages that are pure, clean, nutritious, and palatable. On the other hand, *ḥaram* or banned items that believers should abstain from include pork flesh, meat from a dead animal that has not been slaughtered according to the appropriate Islamic manner, food that contains invocations other than Allah's name, blood, and alcohol. Additionally, the meat of clawed birds is listed on the list of *ḥaram* foods. The secondary sources of *Halal* are only applied when there is no evidence found in the primary sources. For example, modern technology has made it possible for certain types of food like chocolates to be processed, Muslim jurists in such circumstances observe the By-products, as well as the conditions of production in order to reach a sound conclusion as the permissibility of such food or service based on scholarly consensus or analogy.

PROSPECTS AND BENEFITS OF HALAL INDUSTRY IN THE GAMBIA

Three key causes have led to the *halal* industry's rise as one of the world's most profitable and important sector. The first is the rising Muslim population on a global scale. This is demonstrated by the United Nations figures, which show that the Muslim

¹⁵ Prescribed as Islamic slaughtering.

¹⁶ Albattat, Ahmad, Ahmad Pitra, Jumli, Mahendran, Peyandi Paraman & Azmi, Azila "Shariah Compliant Hotel: Identifying its Service Quality on Muslim Customers". International Conference on Economy, Tourism and Technology. 2018.

¹⁷ Al-Bukhari, "The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih Al-Bukhari: Arabic-English (English and Arabic Edition)", Book 21, Hadith No: 4751.

population globally is growing at a pace of 6.4 percent per year, while the Christian population is growing at a rate of 1.4 percent, much less than the Muslim population growth rate.¹⁸ Thus, Muslims represent a sizable consumer market for halal items, based on this data. The second factor is the Muslim community's improved economic level as a result of the recent growth in the number of affluent Muslims. This has resulted in a shift in the mindsets of Muslim and ethical customers, propelling the halal business to grow further into lifestyle items, halal travel and hospitality services, and halal fashion. Third is the anticipated future rise in food demand of more than 70% by 2050. This demonstrates the future endurance of a high demand for halal cuisine. This is feasible given the current trend in the global halal food sector, which has risen to \$667 billion over the last decade, accounting for up to 20% of the global food industry.

Food economists predict that the halal food sector will become a more powerful market force soon. This can be explained by four prevailing tendencies. The first is the rapid growth of Islam around the world, which has increased demand for halal products. This is seen by the anticipated 16 percent yearly rise in the use of halal products. Second, the growing tendency of non-Muslims using halal food and products for ethical and safety reasons. The United Kingdom is an example of this growing tendency among non-Muslims, where the Muslim population exceeds 2 million while the number of halal meat eaters exceeds 6 million. The similar upward trend in the number of non-Muslim Dutch customers of halal cuisine is reflected in the annual total spending of \$3 billion.¹⁹ Two reasons have boosted the appeal of halal items, elevating them to the level of mainstream consumer goods. The third element that has contributed to the rise of Halal consumers as a market force is the growing Muslim population and their increasing purchasing power. The fourth element is that Muslims have a higher level of consciousness about the need of eating only halal food. A sign of Muslim customers'

¹⁸ Azis Jakfar Soraji, Mohd Daud Awang, and Ahmad Nasir Mohd Yusoff, "Malaysia Halal Trust: Between Reality and Challenges," IJASOS- International E-journal of Advances in Social Sciences, April 30, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.18769/ijasos.309676>.

¹⁹ Hassan, Elasrag. "Halal Economics Opportunities and Challenges." SSRN Electronic Journal, 2016. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323618631_Halal_Economics_Opportunities_and_Challenges.

greater knowledge is the rapid increase in yearly sales of halal cuisine throughout Russia, with demand for halal items growing at a rate of 30% to 40% each year.

HALAL INDUSTRY'S SCOPE, OPPORTUNITIES, AND CHALLENGES

Some Reflections, however, suggest that the halal market is experiencing certain difficulties. Among its apparent obstacles are the ongoing battle for halal food standards and accreditation, both of which need further education among OIC nations on the subject. Other obstacles facing the halal sector include Denmark's recent prohibition on halal and kosher slaughter, as well as media scare tales regarding halal food. Despite the halal market's rising worldwide potential, Western media's concerted efforts in this area have had a detrimental effect on public opinion. Ill will against Muslims and their culture was fostered, resulting in a slowdown of the halal market's growth. This created a significant obstacle for the halal sector. To address this issue, halal industry stakeholders should create suitable ways to combat misconceptions and biases regarding Muslim culture, therefore ensuring the halal sector's growth and development.

Food economists predict that the *halal* food sector will become a more powerful market force in the near future. This can be explained by four prevailing tendencies. The first is the rapid growth of Islam around the world, which has increased demand for halal products. This is seen by the anticipated 16% percent yearly rise in the use of halal products. Second, the growing tendency of non-Muslims using halal food and products for ethical and safety reasons. The United Kingdom is an example of this growing tendency among non-Muslims, where the Muslim population exceeds 2 million while the number of halal meat eaters exceeds 6 million. The similar upward trend in the number of non-Muslim Dutch customers of halal cuisine is reflected in the annual total spending of \$3 billion²⁰. Several reasons have boosted the appeal of halal items, elevating them to the level of mainstream consumer goods. The third element that has contributed to the rise of halal consumers as a market force is the growing Muslim population and their increasing purchasing power. The fourth factor is that Muslims are more aware of the need of consuming only halal food. The rapid increase in annual sales of halal cuisine

²⁰ Farah Adilla. *Global Halal index Encyclopaedia Britannica: HDC Export Analysis*. Halal Development Corporation Berhad. 2020.

throughout Russia, with demand for alal items expanding at a rate of 30 percent to 40 percent each year, is a symptom of Muslim customers' increased awareness.

The continuous battle for ḥalal food standards and accreditation, both of which require greater education among OIC states on the subject, is one of its apparent roadblocks Denmark's recent prohibitions on ḥalal and Kosher slaughter, as well as media scare stories about ḥalal food, are among the other challenges facing the ḥalal business. Despite the global potential of the ḥalal market, Western media's persistent efforts in this sector have had a negative impact on public opinion. The spread of hatred for Muslims and their culture has slowed the expansion of the halal business. This posed a big challenge for the ḥalal industry. To address this issue, stakeholders in the halal business should develop effective strategies for addressing misconceptions and biases regarding Muslim culture, ensuring the halal sector's continuous growth and development. More than 95% of Gambians are Muslims, this increases the opportunity for a rapid growth of ḥalal industry in the Gambia. Although the Gambia is yet to have a systematic ḥalal industry with assigned regulatory bodies and inspectors. For example, certificate issuance bodies, etc. Based on the foundations established by previous Islamic entities, there are currently several strong Islamic institutions who are working hard to introduce a systematic body that will promote the growth of ḥalal industry in the Gambia through partnership with strong entities that precede the Gambia in the field as well as introducing measures to increase the awareness of ḥalal products and services amongst Gambian consumers. Food and beverages, cosmetics, and hotel industry are all booming industries in the Gambia including pharmaceuticals²¹. The Gambia Association of Traditional Healers has recently started introducing measures to partner with the *Movement for Islamic Research and Da'wah* (MIRD)²² to promote ḥalal pharmaceuticals in the Gambia. Ḥalal industry is a great potential and hope for economic development in the Gambia through employment generation, provision, and assurance of ḥalal products and services which represent a symbol of religious endowment, safety and hygiene. Most Muslims are also concerned about the hotel industry in the Gambia as sex tourism has increased at an alarming rate. Halal industry also provides hope in that area as Muslim friendly hotel services may help to mitigate the problem of sex tourism and other

²¹ Shaikh Ibn Abbas. *Market Analysis of Consumer goods: A case study of Gambia consumer protection agencies*. Gambia: Movement for Islamic Research and Da'wah (MIRD). 2018.

²² An Islamic Research Foundation registered in The Republic of The Gambia.

related problems. Halal industry is highly embraced and upheld in the Gambia due to the religious beliefs of the people. Even though it is yet to be coordinated and systemized. Gambians keenly await the integration of systematic halal industry to start reaping the fruits of this lucrative but promising industry.

CONCLUSION

Halal is a multifaceted term that encompasses a broad range of activities. Halal, according to *Al-Ghazali* and *Al-Qaradāwī*, encompasses all significant sources of human sustenance, including animals, plants, natural materials, chemicals, and microbes. Additionally, it contains components from biotechnology that are utilised in the manufacture of food and other consumer items such as clothes, toiletries, and cosmetics. Thus, halal can be interpreted broadly to indicate that which is lawful for human consumption and usage under Islamic law. Permissibility or halalness is insufficient in and of itself when it comes to food goods. Additionally, it must satisfy the requirement of "goodness" (*Tayyibin*), which refers to cleanliness, safety, and quality. This is because completed food items undergo a lengthy process, beginning with ingredient selection, material preparation, manufacture, production, storage, transfer, and distribution, all the way to customer service. Thus, the whole supply chain, from the source to the completed product, should adhere to both halal and ethical standards. Due to the fast growth of the halal business and its global recognition, there is an urgent need to expand its reach to include a broader range of consumer goods. Seven main areas comprise the halal industry: food services, consumer goods, financial services, pharmaceutical products, cosmetics products, *halal* logistics, and tourism. The *halal* industry's seven primary sectors may be classified into four broad segments: food and beverage, pharmaceuticals and health goods, cosmetics, and tourism and travel services. The report discussed the definition, origins, extent, prospects, difficulties, and possibilities in the Gambia's *Halal* industry

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